

National Cultural Policy Submission

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Submitted: As an individual

What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you?

First Nations

First Nations perspectives are centrally important to Australia's cultural policy and identity. Engagement for both novice and experienced Indigenous artists is essential for authentic self-expression, well-being and economic independence. How best to achieve this remains a challenge for many communities.

A Place for Every Story

There are many challenges to create a place and time for every story to be heard and seen – especially for children across regional, rural and remote Australia. Greater investment is needed that provide sustainable options for creative practice for children and communities.

The Centrality of the Artist

By focusing on upper case 'A' Artists, we exclude those who explore artistic and creative practice for other than commercial or professional purposes. Maybe use a lower case 'a' for artist so we include all, especially children and novices outside of metropolitan areas and commercial arts markets.

Strong Institutions

We need strong schools, strong community arts venues, and strong museums/galleries/performing arts centres. Bring back the School of the Arts and restore the arts to their central place in society by creating gathering spaces where all people can make, create and expose their artistic lives in their own communities.

Reaching the Audience

Audience reach is highly important, especially in regional, rural and remote areas. Much of art practice outside of school occurs on a fee basis, thus excluding participation for many.

Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why.

First Nations

My work includes collecting children's art and stories. My collection at State Library of Queensland includes 2,500 works from children in regional, rural and remote locations in Australia, China & Viet Nam, including Indigenous communities across Queensland (1990-2020). Indigenous children's art and story form a significant part of the collection; through their creative work, we are able to learn of their lives and dreams. <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/blog/dr-barbara-piscitelli-am-childrens-art-archive-1990-2020-treasure-collection-john-oxley>

A Place for Every Story

Children have powerful stories to tell about important matters such as identity, belonging, human rights, and social worlds. Their ideas rarely get exhibited or discussed as a part of our cultural conversation. We need to make a place at the table for children, their art and their stories.

The Centrality of the Artist

Artists play an important role in passing on their technical and conceptual knowledge to children.

Strong Institutions

Australian schools, museums, galleries and performing arts centres play vital roles in keeping art alive in our communities. Starting in the 1990s, I carried out research and published widely on children's participation and learning in cultural institutions. At the moment, major cultural institutions serve mainly urban constituents, with little to no sustainable funding for non-urban populations. Serving the young and exposing their ideas in exhibitions and productions is a central part of my practice. We do not have adequate resources to serve this population. Cultural institutions need significant sustainable investment for reaching broad audiences, including children.

Reaching the Audience

Include children, young people, families and especially those living outside of metropolitan areas as valued audience. My children's art collection includes children from some of the most remote parts of the country and provides valuable insights into their artistry and creativity. To reach them, I worked over three decades with one-off project-based sponsorship of cultural organisations and donors to reach out to these non-urban populations. This kind of work requires outsiders to go in, but also requires the training/upskilling of locals to meet the artistic needs of resident populations. Work of this nature is essential and needs to be done by many to engage a broader Australian public.

Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?

A whole-of-government focus is very important in implementing the National Cultural Policy. Thus, the policy must clearly define the ways in which various government portfolios and departments will carry out, resource, document and evaluate their responsibilities to enact strong cultural practice in Australia, especially in the educational and regional domains.

Let's give Australia's children the chance to make the arts an enduring part of their lives at school and beyond. Successive reports on the state of arts education in Australia have pointed to weaknesses in the arts ecosystem. We have the opportunity to resolve this generations-long problem through a strong cultural policy with a sustainable arts-education base incorporating enduring relationships between educational, community and cultural institutions.